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Nostalgia for Communism in the Collective Imaginations

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Abstract

The phenomenon of nostalgia became so popular in the postmodern reality that some scholars suggest that it should be considered as one of the most important features of this epoch. Two decades after the fall of communism we can observe growing nostalgia for the past in the Central and Eastern Europe. The aim of the text is to examine different levels and aspects of nostalgia, which is a complex feeling and should not be simplified or reduced to irrational longing for the cruel system. Nostalgic attitudes towards the socialist past are motivated by diverse factors, which ought to be analysed. Since nostalgia is moderated by wishes, desires and dreams, it tells us about the imperfections of the present reality.

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The phenomenon of nostalgia became so popular in the postmodern reality that some scholars suggest that it should be considered as one of the most important features of this epoch. A Russian researcher, Swietlana Boym, claims that in the first decade of the 21st century we are experiencing the proliferation of nostalgia which is just fashionable and that there seems to be a worldwide trend to be nostalgic (Boym, 2011: 456). An American psychologist Lois Shawver, who specializes in studying postmodernity, titled one of her books *Nostalgic Postmodernism* (Shawyer, 2006). More and more scholars discuss the connection between the trend of the romantic time travels to the past and the specificity of today's times. Christopher Lasch claims that the melancholic nature of the postmodernity comes from the unfulfilled promise of progress that was made by modernity (Simpson, 1995: 145). Moreover, Tobias Jones adds that the unfulfilled dreams of happiness caused an epidemic of depression (Jones, 2008: 26).

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Other scholars point to yet other factors of nostalgia, such as: the disintegration of the family bonds, the fading of the traditions, societal transformations, the collapse of the colonial empires' power or mass migrations (being the reason of longing for the old environment) but also the expansion of the consumerism that draws people away from the traditional ideologies. There is no doubt that people are in the need of a big idea for which they could scarify even their lives, but the pursuit of material goods cannot fill this void. (Sepkowski, 2010: 83). The fact that man also longs for the spiritual fulfilment and having problems with reaching one he is forced to escapism, the simple form of which is nostalgia, appears to be a rather trivial statement. (Umphlett, 2006: 129-130). Fredric Jameson emphasises that we have got many reasons to long for the times during which an individual had a clear defined objective of its existence (Jameson, 1991: 156).

What is more, in the humanistic and social studies no one questions the thesis that longing for the past lies in the human nature since man who is aware of the irretrievably and speed of time desperately tries to rescue himself through the imaginative escapes back in time. One can often come across a view that the phenomenon of nostalgia gained strength under the influence of the Enlightenment which questioned the established world order, including the cyclical concept of time, which disturbed the harmony of the contemporary life. In the times of Romanticism, which was based on the rebellion towards the contemporary, rational world, the sentimental attitudes were strongly propagated. The world was looked at through the prism of dreams and fantasies while the unconditionally idealised past was a time to return to. One of the most recurring motives was the inability to determine the object of longing which was the cause of regret after what had been lost forever. At the close of the 19th century people returned to the chronic melancholy. This is commonly explained by fears connected with the future of humanity occurring due to the beginning of the industrial revolution causing fear of the downfall of the contemporary culture (Bielik-Robson, 2008: 347).

People living in postmodernism tend to have a similar attitude towards the changing life, nevertheless the realities are different. There is a consensus in the field of science about the fact that nowadays people have been deprived of tradition and the feeling of belonging. This naturally pushes them towards past which is being trivialised. One of the scholars notices that a postmodern man needs history in a shape of a shallow pastiche where factual material is replaced with random pictures (Cardwell, 2002: 186). The confirmation of this thesis seems to be realised by the very popular in the West but also in Poland historical productions (Kwiatkowski, 2009: 135) in which what matters is only the consciousness of communing with the past although it is just a reconstruction. During such events there is no place for an informed debate since the participants of the events are not interested in the factual aspects but only in the illusion of connecting with the history or rather its preselected parts.

The aim of this essay is to show the emotional attitude toward the communistic past in the Central and Eastern Europe. For many people, the sole idea of an affective memory about the system that despised the individual can seem to be at least peculiar, nevertheless a closer look at the case allows one to notice its background and understand that the affective memory comes from the indispensable human needs. Swietlana Boym, who has already been mentioned in this work, emphasizes that nostalgia is born after revolution since the consequence of every transformation appears to be leaving a certain group outside the change (Boym, 2001: XVI). The fact that nostalgia is a side effect of progress can be seen as a rule. People declaring nostalgic feelings are socially stigmatized as those who oppose the changes for the better (Bonnett, 2010: 5). The Mid-Eastern Europe can function as the confirmation of this thesis. The transformation of the political system in this place was not equal with raising one's material or social status and the costs of the changes for many people appeared to be very severe. Some say that it was the capitalistic epoch that produced more communists than the communist system itself. Resentment can be felt by the former working class - once praised now often humiliated. What is interesting, this phenomenon has got its equivalent in the West which goes through the process of deindustrialisation (Smith, Shackel & Campbell, 2012: 1-3).

That kind of "classical" shape of nostalgia goes hand in hand with what a Slovenian scholar Mitja Velikonja proposes to call "neostalgia" (Velikonja, 2010: 39). It is connected with the commercialization of nostalgia - injecting longing for the past in the rules of consumerism (Hutcheon, 2000: 204; O'Brien, 2012: 26-27). This can be noticed due to the growing number of pubs, restaurants, hotels, shops, clubs, theme parks that in many different ways correspond with the past. Also collections of clothes or the ideas for interior designs sometimes copy the old style, eg. the Polish company "Wojas" began selling in their shops shoes called "Relaxy" that look like their prototypes from the times of PRL but are made from first-class materials. There are many analogous examples,

always however in such cases the price of the product suggests that it has been designed for the middle class and not for the people who lost the most because of the changes.

British anthropologist Gerald W. Creed notices that the nostalgia for communism becomes a mean for the capitalism to expand and perhaps it is the only field in which the domestic entrepreneurs can win a battle with the foreign investors (Creed, 2010: 39). It has to be emphasised however, that nostalgia remains transideological, thus the chaotic mixing of different, extremely contradictory ideologies should not come as a surprise (Hutcheon, 2000: 199) even though it may seem that the idea of unlimited consumerism clashes with the Marxist ideas. Nostalgia is also, as Mitja Velikonja notices, illogical and incoherent (Velikonja, 2009: 370). One should not seek any traits of cohesion in the basis or in the course of reasoning since we speak about the irrational sphere of desperate dreams initially based on wishful thinking (Perković, 2011: 109).

Nostalgia can be also examined on the level of individuality - as individual's memories about the past - and on the level of collectivity which most of all fascinates researchers dealing with the social space. Each and every relation regarding the past, the private one and the collective one as well, is based on the synthesis of selective remembering and deep forgetting (Kuljić, 2011: 24). Thus nostalgia is not only nonhistoric it is also fragmentary and selective. The selected pictures of the past refer only to a very narrow time of relative prosperity (like the decade of Gierek in Poland) and also to the chosen aspects of the former system which are additionally idealized. The objects of longing are not the Stalinist repressions and prisons, not the ongoing lack of commodity or the years of famine but the vouchers for a car, annual holiday, employment, free of charge: sanatoriums, education and widely available medical care (Petrović, 2012: 129).

One of the classics, Maurice Halbwachs, wrote that the past is based on an illusion which is a creation of imagination (Halbwachs: 2008, 163). It is common knowledge that our visualisations are not an ideal representation of reality, that we see things as we want them to be, as they should be according to us. Let us consider the connection of two words in English - "image" and "imagination". One can argue that imagination is a collection of images that are being constantly modified. Imaginations are thus a dynamic category shaped by reality and its changes. British philosopher Mary Warnock believes that the reproductive character of imagination is in fact a continuous process of multiplying images taking place inside the imagination itself (Warnock, 1978: 116). It is not hard to notice that images can be very easily retouched, cropped and adjusted to the most desirable state and one of the factors intensifying these processes is the passing time. We are interested in the collective imagination thus in the common patterns of perception of reality that are characteristic for a given group of people. As Bronisław Baczko writes, "The dispositions of imagination provide the social group with the collective pattern of interpretations as well for the complex as for the diverse individual experiences; for ways of coding, expectations and hopes. The same dispositions make it possible for memories and visions of the past to come together in the pot of collective memory (Baczko, 1994: 42).

It is possible to claim that the longing for the old system is present in the entire post-communistic area but not everywhere in the same degree. The biggest number of people declaring their longing for the past epoch can be found in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, the former Soviet Union and in Hungary, whereas in Poland, Slovenia and in the Czech Republic the number is the lowest. However, everything depends on one's understanding and definition of nostalgia because a number of surveys first of all includes the real and unconditional desire to return to the past system but does not pay enough attention to what Mitja Velikonja called "neonostalgia" - being the synthesis of postmodern melancholy and hedonistic materialism which rises year by year together with the young generations and corresponds to the trends of postmodernity.

Lately, a number of publications appeared dealing with the topic of the increasing popularity of Yugonostalgia among Slovenians. A specific feature of this nation is often emphasised - the longing for the past, not necessarily for the Yugoslavia but for example for the times of the Hapsburg Monarchy (Rogel, 1996: 10). It is worth noticing that the object of longing does not have to be in a form of real experience, it can be something that happened before one's birth as well. It seems that such is the shape of unspecified longing for the times that we know almost nothing about that spreads in the postmodern reality which is reflected in fashion, design and popularity of old movies and songs from the years past. This phenomenon is not the result of the desire to return to the old system but it is the result of dramatic attempts of looking for one's identity and of a desire to be oneself in the complicated reality,

because, as Josefin Bajer claims, the identification with what has passed provides the individual with the feeling of belonging (Bajer, 2011: 65-66).

Psychologists claim that over time memories become more and more idealised. Now it has been twenty years since the collapse of the communist system and such distance causes the reminiscences to be more random. Memories are, after all a connector between the presence and the past. They are constructed not only on the basis of the state of one's mind and one's knowledge but also on the emotional baggage and experiences (Faulenbach 2007: 15). As Maciej Czerwiński emphasises, in the consecutive stages of life we are apt to apply different meanings to the same heroes or events from the past (Czerwiński, 2012: 37). The character of memories is thus extremely affective deprived of any pragmatic reflection. That is why nostalgia often has the shape of Romantic longing for chosen segments of the past reality: social security; stabilization; sport successes; milk-bars; factories and their atmosphere (Rot, 2012: 219-220); or just youth.

A Bulgarian philosopher Maria Todorova notices that nostalgia does not have to necessarily mean the willingness to return to the past system. It can be an attempt to fill today's world with the positive elements of the past epoch as well (Todorova, 2009). Generations brought-up in more modern times also give up to such illusions. Elena Omelchenko notices the peculiar shape of nostalgia among young Russians who believe that old tools that could stop the freedom of word would come in handy in the times of the advancing freedom of manners (Omelchenko, 2000: 161). Such demands appear to be the answer to the rapid changes in axiology which are one of the side-effects of the transformation process. It is common knowledge that every revolution means changing the system of values, thus it should not come as a surprise that the epoch of postsocialism is characterized by a specific interpretation of social norms, which however are not recognized by all. On the other hand there is a question of whether capitalism must be the only alternative to the socialist economy or is it possible to follow the Scandinavian pattern of the welfare state connected with democracy (Buden, 2012: 37).

It has to be emphasised that the collective memory acts accordingly to its own rules and that it is not a sum of individual memories since they undergo harmonization on the collective level. Imaginations are being subject to the ongoing control. They are being programmed in a specific direction and the main role in this process is played by trustees of symbolic power. They are in possession of the unquestioned ability to moderate the shapes of the collective memory and the collective imaginations. This group of people, called also by Pierre Bourdieu the owners of the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991: 23), consists of politicians, journalists, feature writers, writers, artists and other creators of public opinion. Discussing this issue Bronisław Baczko emphasises the special role of mass media which thanks to the advanced modern technology have the ability to rapidly customize and send any information (Baczko, 1994: 44). Of course one cannot forget about the Internet which nowadays is one of the most if not the most important creators of the collective space (Narváez, 2012: 173).

Bearing this in mind it is almost impossible not to notice that - at least in Poland - the communistic period is being constantly reminded through the so called phenomenon of the "culture of repetition" which involves bringing back old movies or series (Kulmiński, 2010: 229-230). This fact should not come as a surprise as it would be hard to erase as well the epoch that lasted for fifty years as its achievements although some tried to laboriously perform a "confiscation of memory", as Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešić put it evocatively (Ugrešić, 2006: 337-367). Such actions aroused opposition since a clear cross-out of past and depriving people of their rights to memories appears to be total absurd. However, it has to be noticed that the presence of cultural legacy of the postcommunistic period in mass media must result in improving the relations with the old system. It is enough to mention that ritualization and thus multiplying specific patterns and cultural content are the indispensable conditions without which the preservation of the message in the collective space could not exist. Therefore the judgement that the frequent presence of this content was the stimulus for looking at the old times in a positive way seems to be justified.

Zuzanna Grębecka writes that among young people who have no personal experience with PRL there is a tendency to treat literary fiction or film fiction as a reliable source of information. Grębecka calls this phenomenon "bareization" (Grębecka, 2010: 337). This term seems to be suitable enough as it reflects the false, quite modified

and embellished picture of reality that got rooted in the collective consciousness.[†] Using only that kind of sources one can get an impression that in times of the communism life was funny and thus interesting. Young people who are used to consumer lifestyle do not have a tendency to rationalize. They do not realize that in the past supply did not meet demand and that the staples were limited. But as it was already mentioned the phenomenon of nostalgia does not come with the willingness of reconstituting the old system. It is rather a joke thus it is possible to speak about the deideologization of that kind of nostalgia.

While discussing the idea of longing for the past it should not escape one's attention that a very specific situation occurs on the areas of the former federations, decomposition of which appeared to be one of the causes of the communism's collapse. One can risk saying that the longing for one country and common cultural space (of course in various degrees of strength) is present among the successor states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. There are rumours about reunification and slow re-establishment of connections between countries divided once with borders (Maćkowiak, 2012). What is more, scholars dealing with the problem of nostalgia notice that it does not matter where or when it will appear, it will always dominate in the sphere of culture (Holbrook, 1993: 111).

Here it is important to distinguish between the sincere regret after a broken country and the lost community from an affirmative attitude toward the communist system, since a large number of nostalgics longs for the multicultural and multiethnic motherland rather than for the totalitarian regime or for the guarantees of the welfare state. The intellectual and cultural elite fondly recall "bigger markets, bigger audience, bigger readership" (Debeljak, 2002: 214). However, their dreams may have come true - at least partially - as small, poor countries cannot allow themselves to translate all the world's literature. In 5,5 million Slovakia, where the majority of population prefers to read in Hungarian, it is much easier to ship the book from the Czech Republic than publish it in the country (Szczygiel, 2012: 59). Also on the territory of the former Yugoslavia there is a common book market. Publishers cannot count on the profits from publications in the states that are in deep economical crisis that is why they were forced to expand their offer to the entire former Yugoslavia. In small and poor Macedonia no one prints book published in Serbia or Croatia (Mitrevski 2000: 192). Every year in the Bosnian city of Tuzla a prize of Meša Selimovic is awarded for the best novel from the area of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (<http://www.southeast-europe.eu/index.php?id=1471>).

Such a phenomenon seems to be a natural result of common past the effect of which is a close relation and mutual interactions between the Southern Slavic cultures (Stojmenska-Elzeser, 2011). A similar situation takes place in the Post-Soviet region. Although in that region the hegemony of Russian language is quite clear because in many cases other cultures are marked with the stigma of slavery and the trauma of inferiority (Załęski, 2012: 61). Nevertheless, there is a specific cultural community dominated not only by the Russian language, which is the "lingua franca" for the entire former USSR and happens to be chosen as a communication tool by the ethnic minorities living inside the borders of new nation-states (Khazanov, 1996: 239), but also by Russian film, literature and music. This should not be a surprise when taking into consideration the long-term political relations of which one of the results were cultural and demographic diffusions.

One can also risk saying that the parcelled federation still exist especially when referring to the higher education. The language and cultural closeness as well as old contacts create favourable conditions for establishing scientific cooperation and scholar exchange. Schools experiencing the demographic crisis open their doors for students from neighbouring countries. Since a long time a large number of Slovaks decides to study in the Czech Republic where they can even pass exams in Slovakian language as it has got a special status of an "understandable language". Recently, Slovakia pursuing to make the educational profile meet the requirements of the labour market decided to promote the technical majors limiting at the same time the humane majors which, according to some experts, can result in an increase in the affluence of students to the Czech Republic (Palata, 2012). Similar situation can be observed on the territory of CIS where for many people Russian schools are still attractive. Experiencing some demographic issues, the Russian Federation tries to come up with at least a partial solution to the problem which can be the affluence of students from the former regions of USSR (Jarzyńska, 2012). Young people from the regions of

[†] Term: "bareization" comes from the surname of Polish actor and director Stanisław Bareja, who is well known for his comedy films depicting absurdity in the times of PRL.

former Yugoslavia guided by practical considerations such as higher level of education or a possibility of free tuition quite often choose universities from other countries of the region.

Similar conclusions can be formed regarding the labour market, tourist market or the economic exchange. The inhabitants of CIS are the by far the biggest group of immigrants living in Russia but migrations take place in other directions as well. The biggest number of seasonal workers in Slovenia comes from the region of former Republic of Yugoslavia especially from the poor Bosnia and Herzegovina (Petrović, 2012: 113-115). The workers are contemptuously called *čefurs*. This problem was shown in Gorana Vojnović's book titled *Czefurzy raus* (Vojnović, 2010). Trips to other countries are also popular for tourist reasons. Slovenians, Croats and Montenegrins compete with each other for Serbian and Macedonian tourists. At the same time the Balkan youth comes to Serbia because of cultural events or to visit Belgrade's clubs which are famous in the entire region. The popularity of historic trips to places connected with common past is still growing (Velikonja, 2012: 75). What is more, the countries of the former Republic of Yugoslavia begin to cooperate to develop a joint tourist offer for foreign tourists who want to sightsee as much as possible in a relatively short time. In May 2013, the representatives of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania met in Belgrade to sign an agreement according to which an Association of Travel Agencies in the South Eastern Europe was established (Osniva se Unija...).

A similar situation took place in the region of former USSR. Russians who want to travel to Ukrainian or Georgian health resorts can be sure that there will not face any language barrier. The middle class living in the Baltic states increasingly chooses to spend their holidays in the East. The big difference is that such ideas are not being actively supported by the national community - not like in the former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, the European funds are being used to finance the trans-frontier cooperation projects developing tourism in the South Eastern Europe. The initiative that is to improve the promotion of health tourism on the Serbian-Bosnian borderland that is rich in curative waters is a great example of this process (<http://srb-bih.org/?p=818&lang=ba>).

Focusing on the experiences connected with being abroad, Milan Kundera wrote about the emptiness and the lack of "a safe net which a man could count on in his own country where he has his own family, friends and where he can communicate with everyone using the language known from the early days of his life" (Kundera, 1984: 57). It is doubtful that this kind of feelings can be experienced by the inhabitants of the former USSR republics - Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia - while travelling inside the non-existent states. Visiting the parts of the world that once belonged to a common state simply becomes fashionable and for many people happens to be the main source of income. An example of this can be the seventh kilometre - a bazaar in Odessa, which is considered to be the biggest in the entire Europe, where people coming from all over the countries of former USSR trade their commodities. A similar place to this was Sadachlo - closed in 2005 by president Saakashvili - where Georgians, Armenians, Azeris but also Russian traded with each other (even during the fights in Nagorno-Karabakh region) or drank tea not paying any attention to the political struggles (Górecki, 2010: 361-362; De Waal, 2003: 279).

For many reasons old countrymen, also happen to be the best economical partners (even because of the low competitiveness in the West) and that is why the majority of export is sent to the partner countries. These pragmatic aspects make the old federations still constitute a quite coherent unity. Tim Judah, a journalist specialising in the Balkan Peninsula issues, in 2009 proposed to introduce a term "yougosphere" bearing in mind the existence of strong cultural and economical links connecting the states of former Yugoslavia (Judah, 2008: 3-4). It seems that similar ideas are present on the territory of the other two decomposed state organisms as well.

What is more, it is also worth noticing that the factor of common, overethnic nationality - Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian, Soviet - actually existed. In each of the analysed cases, a considerable number of individuals agreed that they were part of that nationality and now the only thing that remains for them are memories. Some opinions seem to confirm the longing for Czechoslovakia, like this one, the author of which is an elderly Czech: "If someone was born Czech, he was also a Slovak and if someone was born a Slovak, he was also a Czech" (Szczygieł 2012: 59). A Belorussian writer and journalist Svetlana Alexievich in her book about the tragedy of Chernobyl and the inhabitants of that region, devotes some space to the Soviet mentality. In her interviewee's answers one can very often find declarations of identity expressed with the words "we were Soviet people" (Aleksijewicz, 2012: 198). Of course with the advent of new era, "Homo sovieticus" was quite often conducting a self-identification conversion, but as the scholars claim, once gained, the symbolical apparatus is very hard to change. In a survey form 2009, 8% of Russian citizens for the question: "Who am I?" answered: "I'm a Soviet man" (Golińska, 2012: 40). However, one

can presume that many of those who chose other variants of identity are actually longing for the epoch of the strong, superpower motherland.

As it was already mentioned, collective imaginations are a dynamic category. They constantly undergo changes thus nostalgia should have analogous properties since it belongs to the collective imaginations. That is why the thesis of the constantly changing nostalgia seems to be legitimate. What is more nostalgia is constructed by the society thus its shape is moderated by reality (Halbwachs, 2008: 168-170). One can expect that together with the passing of the old generation, the "classical" form of nostalgia that is understood as a form of longing for the communist system will decline. But in accordance with the trends of the postmodern epoch other shapes of this phenomenon will intensify. The reincarnation of nostalgia is an unavoidable process and because of that scholars stand before an opportunity to analyse its political, social, economical and cultural functions and consequences as well.

Małgorzata Rejmer in her book devoted to Bucharest but at the same time to all Romania and its society, pays attentions to the phenomenon of warm feelings toward Nicolae Ceaușescu who was hated some time ago. Moreover, in a survey from 2010, 46% of citizens declared having positive connotations with the epoch of Ceaușescu which was deftly used by the marketing specialists who introduced the Ceaușescu vodka to the market or used his image to promote a mobile network and chocolate bars (Rejmer, 2013: 124-125). Romania, however, is not an exception, since for example in Slovenia Tito helped in selling cars, in Croatia - wine, in Serbia and in Macedonia - mineral water and in Bosnia – ties (Volcic, 2011: 196). In the former GDR, where only 20% of inhabitants considers themselves to be citizens of united Germany, "Ostprodukte" area very popular commodity (Trenkner, 2002: 16-17). In Thuringia, a museum that is located in a bunker offers a possibility to spend a night in conditions in which the GDR soldiers lived (Noc w bunkrze....). Berlin on the other hand tries to make income by using its past and making the Berlin Wall Memorial one of its biggest tourist attractions where one can not only contemplate the history but also buy souvenirs. The motif of GDR is a good marketing strategy when one takes into consideration all the events - concerts, exhibitions, shows inspired by the culture of the old times or tours such as "Ostalgie-Tour" or "Trabi-Safari" (Frey, 2013: 109). It seems that in these cases the traditional nostalgia overlaps with the neonostalgia as these products sold with the "communitistic" label are supposed to attract the younger generation that is looking for original content and does not want to ascribe any ideological meaning but rather treat these products as a good joke.

Also in his work, Rejmer quotes an interesting statement of a film director, author of an extremely biased documentary *Autobiografia Nicolae Ceaușescu*, about the dictator himself: "Marxist, patriot-nationalist, conservative and uncorrupted - a professional politician." Andrei Pleșu commented on this statement by reminding that Hitler and Stalin were also patriots (Rejmer, 2013: 125). The discussion that swept through the Romanian internal discourse is worth noticing as it shows how easily changes can take place in the collective imaginations. The argument of not being able to deal with the past is often mentioned (Tismăneanu, 2010: 269-270), but this does not seem to be enough to explain why a detested man who continuously humiliated the society and whose wife was a symbol of conceit and primitivism suddenly became a big cheese in politics. This is not exclusively a Romanian phenomenon since one can come across similar transformations in the collective memory in the entire post-communist region. On the territory of the former Soviet Union one could easily meet people considering Stalin to be a big leader. According to a certain Russian expert such an opinion is held by twenty to twenty-five percent of society (Orieszkin, 2011: 21).

But also in Poland, Jarosław Kaczyński while trying to gain the nostalgic electorate said that Edward Gierek was a patriot. This was just a catchphrase used in the midst of the electoral period, but such slogans can root in the collective spaces provided they are constantly ritualized. Any politician can be called a patriot. Everything depends on the interpretation of actions performed by a given politician and motives standing behind those actions. From the perspective of this essay a positive opinion about Gierek from the mouth of a candidate who bases his politics on radical anti-communism is absolutely worth noticing. As it was already mentioned, twenty years have passed since the collapse of communism hence it should be easier to gain some ideological distance to that period. Thus one should expect the affirmation of old leaders to gradually stop amazing and be treated as a kind of attitude of people who do not want the comeback of communism but who want to oppose the current reality. Without a doubt the nostalgia for communism will not fade away although its form can undergo some changes.

Thus if nostalgia is supposed to permanently enter the 21st century and in the case of post-communist areas it will also be the nostalgia for communism perhaps it would be wise to think about the possible results of this process. It is quite certain that politicians will still try to use the social mood to reach their own goals which is noticeable since the beginning of the 90'. The Croat leader Franjo Tuđman wanted to be seen as the new Tito although he was building his political programme on totally different postulates. He knew however, that his nation needs a strong leader and a working pattern was the easiest to find in the recent past.

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy played the cards of nostalgia promoting the restitution of the Soviet Union. Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, tries to put into practice the idea of Eurasian Union. Such actions are very popular with a part of the society that believes that granting the permission to dismantle of the empire was a mistake. Putin had to be aware of that when in 2005 in his address to the nation he claimed that the downfall of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century and a real drama for Russians. More or less in the same time a song by Oleg Gazmanov - *Sdielan w SSSR* became a hit.

It is worth noticing that a warm attitude toward the past can help with fighting prejudices and in consequence lead to reconciliation, but for this a large amount of time will be needed. Without a doubt, looking at a communist state without extreme negative emotions seems to be an important basis for building peace on the territories marked by the stigmas of ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia.

This work was to be a multi-aspect attempt at looking at a phenomenon of longing for communism. The author of this essay wanted to emphasize the phenomenon's complexity as the nostalgia itself is often being trivialised and falsely identified with the glorification of a system that is politically criminal and economically inefficient and at the same time causing an individual to be destructive toward the state and toward the attitude to work (Biro, 2006: 40-41). Meanwhile, nostalgia for a certain or even the narrowest part of the old reality is gaining popularity in the majority of the post-communist societies, an example of which are dreams of repetition of sporting successes. Nostalgia also seems to fit in perfectly in the worldwide trend of longing for the past. Several pages are definitely not enough to explain the phenomenon of nostalgia and its causes thus this essay is more a review of the most important perspectives.

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